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November 14th, 2010

Your Montessori "Calling"

As Christian Montessorians we live pretty insular lives. Most people we meet don't understand Montessori. Traditional educators shake their heads at us. Even when we connect with secular Montessorians they also look at us strangely. Our Christian friends often might wonder if we have joined a new-age cult. We are pretty much alone except for God and each other.

Christian Montessori is a calling. Ephesians 4:11 says "He gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be pastors and teachers." The world tends to diminish our importance – after all most of us work with young children – how significant can that be? And maybe we even tend to do it to ourselves – we diminish the importance of our own work. After all, we are just teachers of little children. However, your "calling" changes that.

As a Montessori teacher you fill more than one role in your calling. Yes, we are teachers but first we are also apostles. We tend to reserve that distinction for Peter, James and John but actually they were only among the first apostles. You fulfill the definition of apostle everyday in your classroom. An apostle is a delegate, an ambassador, a commissioner, a messenger and "one that is sent." Who sent you to your classroom? You are His ambassador and messenger. Our great importance does not come from who we are or what we do (both which are significant) but from Who sent us. You stand each day as the visible Christ that your children see. You share His joyous message every day that they are loved and respected.

A second part of our calling is to be a prophet. We all get nervous at the word "prophet" defining it as some one who foretells the future while missing the other significant function of a prophet as some one who "forth tells" or speaks God's word. Our blessing of being in a Christian Montessori environment is the ability to share the Word boldly.

Third, we certainly take on aspects of the evangelist as we share the good news with our

children. And then which of us do not pastor or shepherd our children (and their parents) to follow Jesus. And all of this is before we get to our "calling" of being a teacher.

What would the world be like if there were more Christian Montessori schools and teachers nurturing children to follow the Lord with their whole heart? You play a significant part in making that happen. First, just by being there. Everyday you bless the children and make it possible for them to love God with their whole "heart and mind and soul and strength."

Second, your being there is a testimony to this God-given inspiration of a way to nurture children. Without your daily witness people cannot believe that what you do is possible. But through you they see the possibilities of what a Godly education (based on how God created the child) can be. Your continued presence is essential.

Third, is there anyone else who sees the value of Christian Montessori more clearly than you? Is there anyone else who would want to see Christian Montessori grow more than you do? You have committed your life to this everyday. We would like to ask you for one more commitment. I know times are tough and money is short but the Fellowship needs your support now to continue the work of expanding Christian Montessori education.

For an individual membership of \$35 you receive a directory of Christian Montessori schools, a copy of the index of articles from the last eight years of The Cobbler, a \$25 discount on conferences and seminars. A school membership of \$150 includes all of the above (membership for the director) as well as a subscription to nine newsletters written for parent education.

As much as you benefit by taking a membership, it is what you give with your membership that benefits children all over the world. Honor the Christ Child by putting a membership under your Christmas tree for real "Peace on Earth and good will to men."

Memberships may be done on line at www.crossmountainpress.com or by mail 22630 East Range, San Antonio, TX 78255

November 13th, 2010

What I wish I knew before I started ... how much fun it could be. Pt. 9

Fun? Not on the first day or the first week or maybe even the first year. Anxiety to do it right, concern not to mess up; fear "Am I cut out for this?" Doubt "Can this really work" Confusion "Did I give them this lesson?" Panic "What do I do next?" Paranoia "What if the parents know that I don't know?" And on and on goes the emotional rollercoaster. Fun? Hardly! But it will come. Not everyday nor every hour. Fun is not the goal but it is a reward that surprises. You're hip deep in red rods, sand paper letters, botany and math – juggling them all (and your student's needs and cares) when sunshine breaks through on a child's face and the joy of discovery becomes tangible and verbalized. "Teacher, do you know that three times two is the same as two times three?" Of course you do but you are not three or four years old at the beginning of great discoveries in life – where everything is fascinating and new. (Teachers must be great actors where you put on the excited face and the breathless "Really?" to enter their joy.)

On one hand the purpose of Montessori is not just "fun" nor is it just "learning". It lies somewhere in the middle of having fun learning. How serious is it if you don't do color tablets on Tuesday? But how serious is it if the child never learns to see the colors of God's creation and to take that joy deep into their heart and life. Yes, parents want their children to learn (and they will) but don't lose the joy of learning in the process. Maybe if we exchange the word fun for joy we won't feel as frivolous – but joy is fun!

And that joy can be yours if you remember why you are there – to introduce them to the wonder of God's creation (yes, that even includes math). And what is the greatest wonder you have the privilege of introducing them to- besides God? Themselves! They are not blank slates but are hand inscribed by their Heavenly Father with all the creativity, gifts and talents He has ordained for them. Our joy (and job) is like peeling the artichoke to get to the heart. So many of us in life miss the greatest gifts that God has given because no one has ever taken the time to help us discover our own treasure. Enter into the child's joy of discovery and have fun. There is still plenty of time for spindle boxes.